

Lostine Corridor Public Safety Project COLLABRATION

Introduction

The Responsible Official designed and applied a collaborative process that includes multiple interested persons representing diverse interests and is transparent and non-exclusive, as required by the Healthy Forest Restoration Act, Section 603(b)(1)(C)(i) and (ii)(I).

The following describes the collaborative process through planning and development of the Lostine Project.

Guidance For the Healthy Forest Restoration Act

The 2014 Healthy Forest Restoration Act, Section 603(b)(1)(C)(i) and (ii)(I), also referred to as the “Farm Bill”, established that projects analyzed under the authority for categorical exclusions (CEs) apply a collaborative process through the planning efforts. The Act states that the collaborative process be as follows:

- (i) Includes multiple interested persons representing diverse interests; and
- (ii) (i) is transparent and nonexclusive; or
 - (ii) Meets the requirements for a resource advisory committee under subsections (c) through (f) of section 205 of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (16 U.S.C. 7125)?

The process applied to the Lostine Project is guided by (i) and (ii)(i).

Forest Service

To facilitate shared learning around the Farm Bill, the Forest Service established a central Farm Bill SharePoint site. This site covers multiple Farm Bill tools (Insect and Disease authorities, Good Neighbor Authority, Designation by Prescription/Description, and Stewardship Contracting) and acts as a central repository for Farm Bill information, guidance, success stories, presentations, project information, and templates.

For the Lostine Project the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest applied agency guidance (*RI Collaboration and Discussion Handout*, Feb 2015) from this site for developing their collaborative process. This guidance provides aspects of collaboration to consider in designing the process, and clarifies that:

- Work with a formal collaborative group is ***not necessary*** to meet the requirements of the Act
- Recognize from the beginning that because this is a collaborative process (not a formal collaborative group), the responsible official is ***not looking for consensus***. The responsible official will equitably value insights from each participating individual and

organization and *will not rely solely on any single individual or group perspective* when making decisions for the project.

- There is no “one size fits all” approach to collaboration
 - Project-level collaborative processes do not need to mirror more complex collaborative processes that may be appropriate at the programmatic/planning-level
 - Each project will have its own unique issues and participants so the process may vary from project to project

Collaboration Design

The Forest Service designed a collaborative process to engage members of the public who may be interested or affected by the risk reduction activities in the Lostine Corridor, including the Nez Perce Tribe, property owners in the corridor, and individuals or organizations that were involved in natural resource management, public and emergency service providers, conservation organizations, and timber industry in the local area.

Engagements were often in person, either on or off-site of the project, and involved discussions and gathering input on design ideas and mitigation measures, understanding how people used and valued the corridor, and issues or concerns with current forest conditions and with the proposed actions.

The Forest Service also gathered input on the project from a wider group of individuals and organizations through scoping letters, press releases, and on-line postings of maps and project information. The Wallowa County Natural Resource Advisory Committee¹ (NRAC) helped disseminate information about the project and invitations to attend meetings and field trips to the broader community in Wallowa County. NRAC also assisted in hosting several of the events.

The design of the collaborative process was intended to be open and transparent and to involve multiple interested persons representing diverse interests. The process facilitated several events where diverse interests could discuss thoughts on tradeoffs for each of the risk reduction proposals and learn from each other on different perspectives and values regarding the Lostine Corridor. The Forest Service was able to apply this information to project design, and was able to adjust the design throughout the process of these engagements and input.

Summary of Communications and Collaborative Engagements

03/24/2006- *Completion of Wallowa Counties Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP).*

The Wallowa County CWPP was the result of analysis, professional cooperation and collaboration, assessments of wildfire risk, and other factors considered with the intent to

¹ Wallowa County NRAC is the second longest operating (since 1996) All Lands Collaborative in the PNW (2016, University of Oregon, USDA Forest Service, “National Forests and Communities”).

reduce the potential for wildfires that threaten people, structures, infrastructure, and values in Wallowa County. This plan as established the Lostine Corridor as priority WUI area at-risk from a wildfire event.

The CWPP was prepared in compliance with the National Fire Plan, the "Ten Year Comprehensive Strategy...", the Tri-County Hazard Mitigation Plan (Baker, Union, and Wallowa Counties), Senate Bill 360, and the Healthy Forest Restoration Act. For further information about public participation please see section IV. *Community Participation and Education*, within the CWPP.

- 11/16/15 – *Meeting*: Forest Service, Oregon Department of Forestry, Natural Resource Conservation Service, US Fish and Wildlife, National Marine Fisheries Service, Wallowa County Soil and Water Conservation District, Wallowa County Natural Resource Advisory Committee, Wallowa Resources – discussed possible projects in Wallowa County to address forest health issues. Agreement that highest priority location for action was the Lostine Corridor, due to high level of risk and identification as a priority treatment area in the Wallowa County’s Community Wildfire Protection Plan (2006)
- 11/18/15 - *Meeting*: Nez Perce Tribe and Forest Service. Discussed possible project in the Lostine Corridor, risk reduction and objectives, and design considerations.
- 11/24/15 - *Meeting*: Wallowa County Natural Resource Advisory Committee (NRAC) and Forest Service. Discussed possible project in the Lostine Corridor, risk reduction and objectives, and design considerations. Discussed NRAC assisting the Forest Service in a collaborative process for the community.
- 12/15/15 - *Phone Contact*: Forest Service (District Ranger) contacted local landowners to discuss their thoughts on potential risk reduction project in the Lostine Corridor, design considerations, and timelines. Also discussed future meetings to continue to work through design feathers.
- 12/15/15 - *Phone Contact*: Forest Service (District Ranger) contacted representatives of timber industry in northeast Oregon to let them know about the potential project in the Lostine Corridor.
- 1/15/16 – *Phone Contact*: Forest Service (Acting District Ranger) contacted Hells Canyon Preservation Counsel. Discussed possible project in the Lostine Corridor, risk reduction and objectives, potential concerns the organization (HCPC most interested in the Forest Service Hazard Tree policy) may have and design considerations to address these concerns.

- 1/20/16 - *Consultation*: US Fish & Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service and Forest Service. Initial pre-consultation to discuss Lostine Project, possible design criteria and mitigations.
- 2/02/16 - *Newspaper*: Public notice of 30 day scoping period in the paper of record, Wallowa County Chieftain, inviting input on the proposed Lostine Public Safety Project.
- 2/02/16 - *Letter*: from the Forest Service mailed to 38 interested or affected parties, and posted to the project website. This scoping notice indicated the primary safety concern and listed 4 objectives. Input was requested to be received by March 10th 2016.
- 2/02/16 - *Post*: posted scoping letter and maps to the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Lostine Project website.
- 2/03/16 - *Press Release*: From Wallowa-Whitman National Forest about the proposed Lostine project and purpose and need.
- 2/08/16 - *Newspaper*: Notice in Baker City Herald for the proposed Lostine project indicating how to comment during the scoping period. A copy of this notice was uploaded to the project website.
- 2/10/16 - *Consultation*: Nez Perce Tribe – Forest Service shared additional information on the Lostine Project with Nez Perce Tribe.
- 2/23/16 – *Meeting*: Local land owners for properties at the Lap-over Ranch subdivision and Forest Service. Engagement to share ideas on project design and discuss/understand unique values of the area.
- 3/02/16 - *Phone and Email Contact*: Forest Service (Planner) called Hells Canyon Preservation Counsel to discuss the Lostine Project and to clarify questions they may have had about project objectives. HCPC requested an extension for submitting scoping comments for the Lostine Project. The Forest Service granted an extension.
- 3/07/16 – *Phone Contact*: Forest Service (Forester) contacted HCPC to offer to host a field tour for them to learn more about and share ideas about the Lostine Project.
- 4/20/16 - *Press release*: From Wallowa-Whitman National Forest sharing summary of input received from public on the Lostine Project.

4/20/16 – *Newspaper*: Press release sent to Wallowa-Whitman Public Affairs contacts, Wallowa County Chieftain, and all interested parties that submitted scoping comments on the results from the public scoping. This press release and letter included a FAQ guide developed from scoping comments/questions. The press release and the FAQ guide were uploaded to the project website.

4/30/16 - *Meeting*: High Lostine Owner's Association annual home owner association meeting. Forest Service shared information about the proposed Lostine project and gathered input from homeowners.

5/10/16 - *Field Visit*: Nez Perce Tribe Fisheries and Forest Service. Discussed project designs to mitigate potential impacts to fisheries in the Lostine River.

6/23/16 - *Field Visit*: Hosted by NRAC and Forest Service – open to all interested people. Invitations disseminated through project web site, Wallowa County Chieftain newspaper, project mailing list, NRAC mailing list, and flyers. Diverse group of participants (environmental organization members, OR Dept of Forestry, timber industry, media, landowners, general public, etc...) learned about proposed actions and discussed different perspectives on tradeoffs. Participants shared ideas on design mitigations and adjustments.





6/29/16 - *Field Visit and Consultation*: US Fish & Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service, Oregon Department of Forestry and Forest Service. Gain understanding of project area, discuss project design criteria and possible mitigations.

7/1/16 - *Newspaper*: Article in La Grande Observer regarding the Lostine Projects recent public field trip.

7/6/2016- *Email*: Sent to NRAC mailing list inviting the public to an open house on 7/14/16 to discuss the project.

7/6/2016- *Press Release*: Noticed appeared in the Wallowa County Chieftain community calendar for 2 weeks inviting the public to an open house on 7/14/16 to discuss the project.

7/14/16 - *Open House*: Hosted by Forest Service and NRAC in Enterprise. Intended to reach community members who may not have had a chance to participate yet and could not attend Field Visits.

7/18/2016 - *Press release and Letter*: From Wallowa-Whitman National Forest sharing updates on the Lostine Project. Copy of press release also sent to the mailing list.

7/22/16 - *Newspaper*: Article in La Grande Observer regarding the Lostine Project.

9/1/16 – *Meeting*. Lap-over Property Owners and Forest Service. Continue discussions about project design features and possible adjustments.

9/06//16 - *Field Visit:* Lap-over Property Owners and Forest Service. Continue discussions about project design features and possible adjustments.

9/14/16 – *Meeting:* HCPC and Forest Service. Discuss HCPC’s concerns with the Lostine Project and use of the Farm Bill authority and level of collaboration.

10/27/16 – *Meeting:* Lap-over Property Owner and Forest Service. Continue discussions about project design features and possible adjustments



10/28/16 – *Field Visit:* Interested public, Oregon Wild, congressional staff, Forest Service. Continue discussions about project design and possible adjustments.

2/22/2017- *Web Posting:* Forest Service posted to the project website draft resource input for the follow resource areas: Aquatics, Botanical, Heritage/Cultural, Invasive Species, Recreation, Scenery, Sec. 7 wild and Scenic River, Silvicultural/Fuels and the Forest Health Protection Blue Mountain Disease Service Centers Lostine Site Visit write up. Also posted at this time were draft copies of the Detailed Proposed Action, Project maps, Response to Comments, and the draft Collaboration Process.

2/23/17 – 4/1/17 – *Various types of contact:* Forest Service visited (in person, by phone and in writing) with interested people regarding concerns about the project, and discussed planning documents. See response to comments for specific dates and topics.

3/27/17 – *Meeting:* HCPC staff and Forest Service. Discussed HCPC’s concerns about the project.

Collaboration Requirements & Considerations for HFRA Projects²

Requirements

HFRA EA/EIS: Title 1, Section 104(f) – “PUBLIC COLLABORATION - In order to encourage meaningful public participation during preparation of authorized hazardous fuel reduction projects, the Secretary shall **facilitate collaboration among State and local governments and Indian tribes, and participation of interested persons**, during the preparation of each authorized fuel reduction project in a manner consistent with the Implementation Plan.”

Farm Bill/Insect & Disease CE: Title VI, Section 603(b)(1)(C) – “Developed and implemented through a collaborative process that (i) includes **multiple interested persons representing diverse interests**; and (ii) is **transparent** and **non-exclusive**.

Considerations

These are considerations only. The Responsible Official has the liberty to craft a collaborative process appropriate for the complexity and scale of his/her project, as long as he/she can demonstrate that process meets the applicable requirements for the HFRA project.

- Use of the Farm Bill/Insect & Disease CE requires use of a **transparent** and **nonexclusive** collaborative **process**. A project using a HFRA EA/EIS requires the Forest Service to **facilitate collaboration among State and local governments and Indian tribes, and participation of interested persons**.
 - Work with a formal collaborative group is **not necessary** to meet these requirements. That does not mean collaborative groups are excluded from participating. A collaborative group could help facilitate the process but should **allow for inclusion of others** interested in participating in the process. (Collaborative groups participating in the collaborative process can continue to apply their bylaws/operating procedures to the formal group, but these would not apply to others choosing to participate in the process.)
 - Recognize from the beginning that because this is a collaborative process (not a formal collaborative group), the responsible official is **not looking for consensus**. The responsible official will equitably value insights from each participating individual and organization and **will not rely solely on any single individual or group perspective** when making decisions for the project.
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² FarmBill share point handout R1 Feb 2015

- Incorporate opportunities for dialogue to allow participants to learn from each other, but **expedite the learning process where possible**
 - Provide enough information that participants can provide informed, insightful feedback – but don't try to make everyone experts in Forest Service programs/processes and applicable law/regulation/policy
 - Consider a phased but accelerated learning process that allows for fairly quick understanding of the project development process and potential treatment area/project area
- Many of those participating in the process are doing so on their own personal time – **be respectful of time!**
 - Hold meetings only when necessary and have clear objectives
 - To increase transparency, use other tools to keep communication networks open in between meetings
 - Frequent mail/email updates, post information to a designated webpage (could be the Forest Service project webpage or webpage managed by external participant in the collaborative process)